

Somerset (Collins House)
Cresswell vicinity
Washington County
North Carolina

HABS No. NC-23

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORIC AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of North Carolina

Historic American Buildings Survey

Prepared at Washington Office
for Southeast Unit

HABS
N.C.
94-CRES.V.
1-

SOMERSET (COLLINS HOUSE)
Cresswell vicinity, Washington County, North Carolina

Owner: United States Farm Security Administration

Date of erection: 1804

Present condition: Fair

Description:

Frame; two stories; gable roof; porch across front under shed extension to gable; two-story wing in rear forming T-shaped plan, the sides of the T being filled with two-story porches. Front three bays, center door, corresponding gallery door above, both with side lights and transom; flanking windows mullioned, triple-light, center sash 6/6, side 2/2. Side elevations, three equally spaced 6/6-light openings; triple-mullioned window in gable. All porches double-tiered with slender Tuscan columns and simple balustered railings.

Plan, center hall with two rooms on either side, cross hall, and rear wing with stair and dining room beyond. All interior trim simple; early Victorian type.

Additional data:

This house was built and the plantation laid out by Josiah Collins, an Englishman who settled at Edenton. About 1800 he and several friends bought a large tract of swampland north of Scuppernon Lake. The ground was made arable by lowering the level of the lake by means of canals, the surface of the lake being now 13 feet above sea level. He finally moved here from Edenton and built the house about 1804. It seems possible that he did not finish it or else altered it at a later period, as some of the trim seems to be considerably later than the date of building.

The neighboring plantations were owned by another Collins and several Pettigrew families. The canals were dug on the property lines dividing the estates, the excavated material forming driveways on either side of the canals. Cypressess were planted in double rows along the canals, as well as in a circle and ellipse in front of the Collins house. These latter are supposed originally to have bordered the race track.

The tradition that there was a mortuary chamber on the top floor is unlikely, and members of the family state that the

rooms in the roof space were used as nurseries. This is indicated by the fact that there is a gate at the head of the stair.

References:

N. C. Guide, p. 495

See also Granary, Somerset (HABS No. NC-24).

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